

Ernie Fletcher
Governor

LaJuana S. Wilcher
Secretary
Environmental and Public
Protection Cabinet



Environmental Quality Commission
14 Reilly Road
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-1132
Phone (502) 564-2150 Fax (502) 564-9720
E-mail: EQC@ky.gov
www.eqc.ky.gov

Environmental Quality Commission

Lindell Ormsbee, Chair, *Lexington*
Betsy Bennett, Vice-Chair, *Louisville*
Patty Wallace, *Louisa*
Gary Revlett, *Shelbyville*
Gordon Garner, *Prospect*
Eugene Zick, *Russellville*
Laura Knoth, *Grand Rivers*

Leslie Cole, *Executive Director*

May 5, 2005

The Honorable Ernie Fletcher
State Capitol Plaza
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Fletcher:

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) is pleased to provide you with a copy of ***The Future of Kentucky's Forests: EQC Forestry Roundtable Summary and Actions.***

Kentucky's forests make a significant contribution to our quality of life, the integrity of our environment and provide an important economic base for employment, tourism and recreation while supporting a diverse wood products industry. Forests, which cover half of the state, truly define the unique character of Kentucky's landscape and our culture.

However, our forests and our forest economy have undergone changes in the past decade. A recent U.S. Forest Service survey reveals that Kentucky is losing on average 137 acres of forestland a day. Competitive pressures and globalization also pose new challenges as well as new opportunities for Kentucky's wood products industry.

The EQC sponsored a roundtable with the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service, Eastern Kentucky University and the University of Kentucky to consider these changes and help focus on opportunities to move Kentucky toward a sustainable forestry future. The roundtable was held September 9, 2004 at Natural Bridge State Park and was attended by 40 people representing the forest industry, state and federal government, academia, forest landowners, conservation groups, tourism interests and professional forestry consultants.

This paper represents a summary of ideas that emerged from the roundtable discussion. We hope the paper will serve to promote additional public dialogue on forestry needs in Kentucky. With that in mind, EQC strongly supports a state forestry summit to build consensus and raise awareness of the forces at work that are shaping the future of our forests and our forest economy.

It has been 10 years since the last forest summit was held in Kentucky. Since that time Kentucky's forests have been ravaged by the Southern Pine Beetle and an updated forest survey has been completed. EQC believes the time is right for Kentucky to convene a Forest Summit to explore how we can work together to better sustain our forest resources and build a strong and healthy forest economy. Several organizations have joined with EQC to express support for a forest summit including:

- The Kentucky Forest Industry Association
- The University of Kentucky
- Eastern Kentucky University
- The Kentucky Woodland Owners Association
- The Kentucky Resources Council
- The Kentucky Department of Agriculture



- Kentucky Heartwood
- The U.S. Forest Service, Daniel Boone National Forest

We hope you find this summary and action report useful and that you will give serious consideration to issuing a call for a Forest Summit to build upon your Prescription for Kentucky which states the following:

Kentucky's timber industry employs over 30,000 people and contributes \$4.5 billion to our state economy. In eastern Kentucky, our timber industry is becoming a significant value-added industry where Kentuckians are producing custom furniture and other value added items. We must promote this industry while requiring that firms conduct their business in a responsible and environmentally sound manner.

The importance of our forest resources warrants that we work collectively to build and strengthen our forest economy while protecting the environment. This will require a new approach – one that recognizes the full value of our forests. Such a summit would be strengthened by the joint participation of the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet, the Commerce Cabinet and the Economic Development Cabinet. A summit is the proper venue to bring these and other interests together to develop a progressive action plan for our forest resources. We hope that such a summit could be convened sometime during the fall of 2005.

EQC stands ready to assist in any manner to support a Forest Summit and appreciates your interest in this important matter.

Best Regards,



Dr. Lindell E. Ormsbee, Chair

Attachment

cc: LaJuana Wilcher, EPPC
Susan Bush, Department of Natural Resources
Leah MacSwords, Division of Forestry